

1
2 **APPLICATION**
3 *For*
4 **UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT**

5
6 *by*
7
8 **NICHOLAS N. NASSIRI**

9
10 *on the invention entitled*

11
12
13 **CERTIFIED AND REGISTERED ELECTRONIC MAIL SYSTEM**
14

15 **Pages of Specification: 46**

16 **Pages of Drawing: 2**
17
18
19
20

21 **TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:**
22

23 BE IT KNOWN THAT I, Nicholas Nassiri, a citizen of the USA,
24 has invented a new and useful method and system of performing
25 certified and registered electronic mail of which the following
26 is a specification:
27
28

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10 **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

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12 **Field of the Invention**

13 The present invention relates generally to the field of
14 electronic mail and more specifically it relates to a
15 method, program and system to independently verify that an
16 electronic message was sent to the intended recipient and
17 to provide the original sender of the electronic message
18 with verification of the time and date that the electronic
19 message was sent.

20
21 **Parent Case Text**

22 This U.S. patent application claims the priority of U.S.
23 Provisional Patent Application No. 60/241235 filed on
24 October 17, 2000 entitled, "Certified and Registered
25 Electronic Mail System" by the same inventor.

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Description of the Prior Art

It can be appreciated that various methods of verifying the delivery of electronic mail have been in use. Typically, methods of email verification are comprised of electronic mail processing systems that track the path of the electronic messages. The Prior Art establishes that the tracking of electronic mail in and of itself is not a novel idea; however, existing electronic mail solutions fail to offer customized delivery verification or verification of recipient identity prior to receipt of the electronic message, as contemplated by the method and system of the present invention.

By way of example, the present invention comprises a method and system whereby the sender of an email can have an independent authority confirm the time and date that an email was delivered to the intended recipient and the time and date that an email was received by an intended recipient. Too, the present inventive device comprises a method and system whereby the sender of an email may request the identity of the intended recipient is confirmed by an independent authority prior to the intended recipient receiving the electronic message.

The prior art discloses United States Letters of Patent 6,282,565 entitled "Method and apparatus for performing enterprise email management" issued to Shaw et al; United States Letters of Patent 6,108,688 entitled "System for reminding a sender of an email if recipient of the email

1 does not respond by a selected time set by the sender"
2 issued to Nielson; United States Letters of Patent
3 5,878,230 entitled "System for email messages wherein the
4 sender designates whether the recipient replies or forwards
5 to addresses also designated by the sender" issued to
6 Weber, et al; and United States Letters of Patent 5,694,616
7 entitled "Method and system for prioritization of email
8 items by selectively associating priority attribute with at
9 least one and fewer than all of the recipients" issued to
10 Johnson, et al.

11
12 The Shaw patent discloses an "enterprise" email system
13 which is designed chiefly to process large volumes of email
14 quickly and efficiently. The enterprise email system
15 processes incoming email using a set of configurable rules
16 that examine incoming messages for a specific attribute
17 state condition and subsequently invoke a configurable
18 action when the attribute satisfies the condition. The
19 enterprise email system assigns a mail queue timer when a
20 message is moved into a mail queue. Each mail queue has a
21 different mail queue timeout value that specifies the
22 maximum amount of time that a message may sit idle within a
23 mail queue. The enterprise email system may automatically
24 move a message from a mail queue into a mailbox of an
25 enterprise email system user that subscribed to the mail
26 queue. If the mail queue timer expires, then the message is
27 routed to another mail queue or enterprise email user. The

1 Shaw patent does not depict a method and system of
2 customized email delivery verification or verification of
3 an email recipient identity prior to receipt of the
4 electronic message by the recipient from the sender.

5
6 The Nielson patent discloses a system for warning the
7 sender of an email message if the message is not received.
8 The Nielson system permits the sender of a message to
9 designate whether the sender wishes to be warned in case
10 the message is not opened by the recipient prior to a time
11 and date specified by the sender. The sender's system
12 maintains a database of such messages, and automatically
13 monitors incoming messages and updates the database as
14 responses are received from recipients of messages. If a
15 response is not received from a recipient prior to the
16 specified date, the system generates a warning message to
17 the sender. The Nielson patent does not depict a method and
18 system of customized email delivery verification or
19 verification of an email recipient identity prior to
20 receipt of the electronic message by the recipient from the
21 sender.

22
23 The Weber patent discloses an electronic mail network, the
24 electronic mail network further comprises a plurality of
25 nodes or computer stations that permit an email message
26 sender to control down stream routing of the message. The
27 system enables the sender of a message to specify which

addresses should automatically be set when a recipient of the message replies to or forwards the message. The Weber patent enables the originator of an email distribution to specify one or more recipients in a reply address field as the destination whenever the recipient replies to the note. By way of example, User A sends a note to User B and designates User C in the reply address field. In the note, User A asks User B to reply with an answer to User C. User B reads the note, then selects the reply function. The system then automatically fills in the reply destination address field of User C. The Weber patent does not depict a method and system of customized email delivery verification or verification of an email recipient identity prior to receipt of the electronic message by the recipient from the sender.

The Johnson patent discloses a method and system for the prioritization of the display order of received electronic email items. In one embodiment, the invention associates a priority sorting attribute with a first email item, sorts an in-basket list of email items by any priority sorting attribute associated with any email item in the in-basket list, said in-basket list including a listing for the first email item, and displays at least a portion of the sorted in-basket list in the sorted order. The priority sorting attribute may be associated with the first email item by either the sender or the receiver of the first email item.

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1 A priority sorting attribute may be associated by the
2 sender with some but not all of the intended recipients of
3 the first email item and the priority sorting attribute
4 will then be associated with the first email item only as
5 it is sent to those recipients with whom the priority
6 sorting attribute has been associated. The Johnson patent
7 does not depict a method and system of customized email
8 delivery verification or verification of an email recipient
9 identity prior to receipt of the electronic message by the
10 recipient from the sender.

11
12 The main problem with conventional methods of email
13 prioritization systems is that none of the prior art has a
14 method, system or process whereby the sender of an
15 electronic message (hereinafter the "Client") can request
16 that an independent, third-party (hereinafter the
17 "Processing Unit") re-send an electronic message in order
18 to establish a secondary, verified, registered and archived
19 record of the time and date the electronic message was sent
20 to the recipient.

21
22 Another problem with conventional method of email
23 prioritization systems is that current methods, systems or
24 processes do not automatically notify the sender of an
25 electronic message when the message was sent by the sender,
26 but rather confirms when the email was received. (i.e., the
27 equivalent of an electronic "return receipt"). There exists
28

1 a need, from the standpoint of the message sender, to
2 ascertain the exact time and date an electronic mail was
3 sent. In an internet based, e-commerce environment,
4 numerous contractual arrangements are dependent on
5 establishing the precise time and date of not only receipt
6 of an electronic message, but also the time and date that
7 the message was sent to the intended recipient by the
8 sender. In the event of dispute resolution, verification of
9 such delivery information is of critical importance.

10
11 Another problem with conventional methods of email
12 prioritization systems is that none of the prior art
13 discloses a method, system or process whereby the sender or
14 another authorized party is able to access verified,
15 archived electronic mail information for future use and in
16 the event of dispute resolution. There exists a need to
17 have an independent, neutral authority that can verify the
18 time and date that an email message was sent to the
19 intended recipient. Likewise, there exists a need whereby
20 an independent third party can verify the message content,
21 including attachments, of an electronic message in the
22 event of dispute resolution.

23
24 Another problem with conventional method of email
25 prioritization systems is that none of the prior art
26 discloses a method, system or process for tracking the time
27 and date an email was sent that is user friendly.

1 Conventional methods of tracking the time and date of
2 delivery are beyond the technical ability of many lay
3 people. The traditional methods of tracking electronic mail
4 are comprised of complicated, technically laden, messages
5 or confirmations that are generated internally by the
6 electronic mail server. Such messages or confirmations are
7 often beyond the ability of a lay person to access or to
8 understand, and as such there exists a need for an
9 independent authority to confirm when the electronic
10 message was sent.

11
12 Another problem with conventional methods of email
13 prioritization systems is there exists no process or method
14 whereby the sender can send an electronic message to an
15 independent processing unit to "hold" the electronic
16 message pending verification of the intended recipient's
17 identity by the processing unit. Upon confirmation, the
18 electronic message is released to the recipient and the
19 sender is notified.

20 Another problem with conventional methods of email
21 prioritization systems is there exists no process or method
22 whereby the sender can send an electronic message to a
23 processing unit that in turn will send the electronic
24 message on the client's behalf thereby rendering the
25 client's identity as anonymous.

26 While the devices of the prior art may be suitable for the
27 particular purpose to which they address, they are not as
28

1 suitable for a method, program and system to certify that
2 an electronic message was sent to the intended recipient
3 and to provide the sender of the electronic message with
4 the time and date that the electronic message was sent.

5 The present inventive device is distinct from the prior art
6 because it acts as an independent, verification that the e-
7 mail was sent; said confirmation is achieved by the
8 invention sending the e-mail message on behalf of the
9 sender, tracking the electronic mail routing, and providing
10 the client with a digital certificate that verifies the
11 time and date when the electronic message was sent, and
12 when it was received.

13 In these respects, the certified and registered electronic
14 mail method and system according to the present invention,
15 substantially departs from the conventional concepts and
16 designs of the prior art, and in so doing provides an
17 apparatus primarily developed for the purpose of a method,
18 program and system to verify that an electronic message was
19 sent to the intended recipient and to provide the sender of
20 the electronic message with a digital certificate that
21 independently verifies the time and date that the
22 electronic message was sent, and if needed, a confirmation
23 of the intended recipient's identity prior to receipt of
24 the electronic message.

1 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

2 In view of the foregoing disadvantages inherent in the
3 known types of method of email verification now present in
4 the prior art, the present invention provides a new
5 certified and registered electronic mail system
6 construction wherein the same can be utilized for a method,
7 program and system to verify that an electronic message was
8 mailed to the intended recipient and to provide the sender
9 of the electronic message with a digital certificate that
10 independently verifies the time and date that the
11 electronic message was sent, and of the intended
12 recipient's identity, if needed.

13 The general purpose of the present invention, which will be
14 described subsequently in greater detail, is to provide a
15 new electronic mail system that has many of the advantages
16 of the method of email verification mentioned heretofore
17 and many novel features that result in a new certified and
18 registered electronic mail system which is not anticipated,
19 rendered obvious, suggested, or even implied by any of the
20 prior art method of email verification, either alone or in
21 any combination thereof.

22 A secondary purpose is to verify the identity of an
23 intended electronic mail recipient prior to the intended
24 recipient's receipt of the electronic mail by an
25 independent authority.

26 To attain the above identified purposes, the present
27 invention generally comprises a method, system and process
28

1 for receiving and sending, and confirming and registering,
2 electronic mail sent over the internet, computer networks,
3 satellite or other systems that facilitate electronic
4 messaging; and a method, system and process for verifying
5 the identity of an intended recipient of an electronic mail
6 prior to delivery of the electronic message. The latter
7 described method uses a central processing unit to
8 facilitate the receipt and delivery and confirmation of
9 electronic mail, and an infrastructure that facilitates the
10 receipt and delivery and confirmation of electronic mail.

11 The present invention satisfies a need in the marketplace
12 for users of electronic messaging to utilize an independent
13 authority (the "Processing Unit") to "register" or
14 "certify" electronic mail communications. The present
15 invention satisfies a need in the marketplace for users of
16 electronic messaging to utilize an independent authority
17 (the "Processing Unit") to verify the intended recipient of
18 an electronic mail communication, prior to receiving it. In
19 either instance, the Client interfaces with the Processing
20 Unit by way of a local computer system and the internet to
21 tender a request.

22 A request for registered or certified mail entails the
23 Processing Unit sending the electronic message, and any
24 attachments thereto, independent of the Client to the
25 intended recipient. The Processing Unit, notifies the
26 Client of when the electronic message was sent, and if
27 requested, when it was received. Notification typically
28 comprises a digital certificate that is emailed to the

1 Client. If requested, the processing Unit retains a copy of
2 the message contents, including any attachments, for future
3 reference. In any event, the Processing Unit retains a
4 record of the time and date the message was sent and when
5 it was delivered for future reference.

6 A request for identity verification prior to the receipt of
7 registered or certified mail entails the Processing Unit
8 contacting the intended recipient prior to sending the
9 electronic message, and any attachments thereto. The
10 Processing Unit verifies that the email account to which
11 the electronic message is to be routed corresponds to the
12 identity of an intended recipient, prior to sending the
13 electronic message. Alternatively, the Processing Unit may
14 hold an electronic message on behalf of the sender, whereby
15 the intended recipient is verified in person at a service
16 center maintained by the present invention. Upon
17 verification of the recipient's identity, the Processing
18 Unit notifies the Client of when the electronic message was
19 delivered to the intended recipient. Notification typically
20 comprises a digital certificate that is emailed to the
21 Client. If requested, the processing Unit retains a copy of
22 the message contents, including any attachments, for future
23 reference. In any event, the Processing Unit retains a
24 record of the time and date the message was sent and when
25 it was delivered for future reference.

26 There has thus been outlined, rather broadly, the more
27 important features of the invention in order that the
28 detailed description thereof may be better understood, and

1 in order that the present contribution to the art may be
2 better appreciated. There are additional features of the
3 invention that will be described hereinafter.

4
5 In this respect, before explaining at least one embodiment
6 of the invention in detail, it is to be understood that the
7 invention is not limited in its application to the details
8 of construction and to the arrangements of the components
9 set forth in the following description or illustrated in
10 the drawings. The invention is capable of other
11 embodiments and of being practiced and carried out in
12 various ways. Also, it is to be understood that the
13 phraseology and terminology employed herein are for the
14 purpose of the description and should not be regarded as
limiting.

15 A primary object of the present invention is to provide a
16 certified and registered electronic mail system that will
17 overcome the shortcomings of the prior art devices.

18
19 Another object of the present invention is to provide a
20 certified and registered electronic mail system that will
21 notify the sender of an electronic message through an
22 independent processing unit (i.e., not the equivalent of a
23 "return receipt" that is generated from the sender's own
24 email server) that the electronic message was sent to the
25 recipient and the time and date thereof. Said confirmation
26 typically will be in the form of a digital certificate that
is archived for future use.

27 Another object of the present invention is to provide a
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1 certified and registered electronic mail system that will
2 allow the sender of an electronic message to forward the
3 message to an independent processing center that will in
4 turn deliver the message on behalf of the sender without
5 identifying the Client. Said Client shall remain anonymous
6 in this transaction but will receive confirmation of the
7 time and date the electronic message was sent, typically
8 in the form of a digital certificate from the Processing
Unit.

9
10 Another object of the present invention is to provide a
11 certified and registered electronic mail system that will
12 allow the sender of an electronic email to forward the
13 electronic message to the processing center to hold on
14 behalf of the sender, pending verification of the intended
15 recipient's identity. Upon verification of the intended
16 recipient's identity, the processing center will deliver
17 the electronic message to the intended recipient and send a
18 confirmation of the time and date thereof via digital
certificate to the Client.

19 Another object of the present invention is to provide a
20 certified and registered electronic mail system that will
21 interface with the patent pending technology as identified
22 in USPTO customer number 021907.

23 Another object of the present invention is to provide a
24 certified and registered electronic mail system that
25 establishes an archive system that stores the records
26 described herein for future retrieval if necessary.

27 Other objects and advantages of the present invention will
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1 become obvious to the reader and it is intended that these
2 objects and advantages are within the scope of the present
3 invention. Specifically, with reference to the term
4 "electronic mail" or "electronic message", the invention is
5 not limited in any way as to the content contained therein.
6 "Electronic mail" includes, but is not limited to, text,
7 audio, visual, video, and digital attachments and any
8 necessary components thereof.

9 To the accomplishment of the above and related objects,
10 this invention may be embodied in the form illustrated in
11 the accompanying drawings, attention being called to the
12 fact, however, that the drawings are illustrative only, and
13 that changes may be made in the specific construction
14 illustrated.
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1 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

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3 Various other objects, features and attendant advantages of
4 the present invention will become fully appreciated as the
5 same becomes better understood when considered in
6 conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which like
7 reference characters designate the same or similar parts
8 throughout the several views, and wherein:

9
10 FIG.1 is a flowchart that identifies the process of an
11 electronic mail verification request as described herein.

12
13
14 FIG.2 is a flowchart that identifies the process of an
15 anonymous electronic mail verification request as described
16 herein.

17
18 FIG.3 is a flowchart that identifies the process of
19 identity verification prior to sending an electronic mail
20 by the method and proscribed criteria as described herein.
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1 **DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT**

2
3 Turning now descriptively to the drawings, in which similar
4 reference characters denote similar elements throughout the
5 several views, the attached figures illustrate a certified
6 and registered electronic mail system, which comprises a
7 method, system and process for receiving and sending and
8 registering electronic mail sent over either a computer
9 network, an intranet, the internet, via satellite or other
10 systems that facilitate electronic messaging; and a method,
11 system and process for verifying the identity of an
12 intended recipient of an electronic mail prior to receipt
13 of the email.

14 The present invention discloses a system, method and
15 process to facilitate three primary functions as follow
16 below.

- 17 (i) **Registered or Certified Email by an independent**
18 **authority wherein the originator/sender of the**
19 **electronic mail is identified.** Method one is an
20 independent verification that an electronic mail
21 (including all attachments thereto) was sent to the
22 intended recipient (as identified by the Client) and
23 the time and date of submission (when the electronic
24 mail was sent) and the time and date of delivery to
25 the intended recipient. Verification is a function of
26 the processing unit who sends the electronic mail
27 independent of the Client, albeit on behalf of the
28 Client, who is identified as the sender/originator of

1 the electronic message. Upon delivery to the
2 recipient, the Client shall receive a confirmation of
3 the time and date in the form of a digital
4 certificate;

5 (ii) Registered or Certified Email by an independent
6 authority wherein the originator/sender of the
7 electronic mail is anonymous. Method two is an
8 independent verification that an electronic mail
9 (including all attachments thereto) was sent to the
10 intended recipient (as identified by the Client) and
11 the time and date of submission (when the electronic
12 mail was sent) and the time and date of delivery to
13 the intended recipient. Verification is a function of
14 the processing unit who sends the electronic mail
15 independent of the Client, albeit on behalf of the
16 Client who is not identified. In this instance, the
17 Processing Unit is identified as the sender of the
18 electronic message only. Upon delivery to the
19 recipient, the Client shall receive a confirmation of
20 the time and date in the form of a digital
21 certificate; and

22 (iii) Registered or Certified Email by an independent
23 authority wherein the originator/sender of the
24 electronic mail requests that the recipient's
25 identity be verified prior to receipt of the
26 electronic mail. Method three is an independent
27 verification of the recipient's identity (as
28 identified by the Client) by an independent authority

1 prior to the recipient receiving the electronic mail.
2 Per methods one and two above, in this instance, the
3 independent authority (the processing unit) confirms
4 the time and date of submission (when the electronic
5 mail was sent) and the time and date of delivery to
6 the intended recipient. Verification is a function of
7 the processing unit who sends the electronic mail
8 independent of the Client, albeit on behalf of the
9 Client, who may or may not be identified. Upon
10 delivery to the recipient, the Client shall receive a
11 confirmation of the time and date in the form of a
12 digital certificate, and a confirmation that the
13 intended recipient's identity was verified before
14 receiving the electronic mail from the Client.

15 To achieve the above-identified objectives, the present
16 inventive device utilizes an independent central processing
17 unit (hereinafter the "Processing Unit") that provides
18 verification of the aforementioned methods. Broadly
19 speaking, the Processing Unit email server interacts with
20 regional email servers and local email servers and with
21 independent local computer networks. Verification requests
22 are tendered through a local computer system to the
23 processing unit via the local and regional email servers.
24 The destination data (the intended recipient) for email
25 communication is acquired from the information described in
26 email data retrieved from the local email server of the
27 customer computer system. When destination data subjected
28 to communication is described in email data retrieved from

1 the email server, the destination data is routed via the
2 processing unit to the intended electronic mail recipient.

3
4 Turning descriptively to the drawings, the Client utilizes
5 the invention in one of three manners as disclosed above.
6 With reference to FIG 1., a Registered or Certified Email
7 by an independent authority (the processing unit) is
8 depicted wherein the originator/sender of the electronic
9 mail is identified. In this embodiment, the Client (the
10 sender/originator of the electronic mail) sends the
11 electronic mail to the intended recipient independently to
12 the intended recipient. Additionally, the Client sends a
13 copy of the email either independently, or as a "cc" or
14 "bcc" to the Processing Unit. The Processing Unit re-sends
15 the email on the Client's behalf as a registered or
16 certified electronic email message to the intended
17 recipient, as identified by the Client.

18 Upon sending the electronic mail to the intended recipient
19 on behalf of the Client, the Processing Unit sends the
20 Client a Digital Certificate via electronic mail. The
21 Digital Certificate confirms the date and time that the
22 electronic mail was sent to the intended recipient by the
23 Processing Unit, and the date and time that the electronic
24 mail was received by the intended recipient. The Processing
25 Unit archives the time and date of submission and delivery
26 of original email for future reference. If requested, the
27 Processing Unit archives a copy of the content on the
28 email, including any attachments thereto, for future
reference.

1 With reference to the method and system depicted FIG 1., in
2 the preferred embodiment, the Client accesses a website on
3 the World-Wide-Web ("WWW") that is a function of the
4 Processing Unit. The website provides information regarding
5 the services available and the means by which the Client
6 shall be granted access to the present invention. The
7 website provides information regarding the how to utilize
8 the present invention and the means by which the Client's
9 remote computer shall register and submit information to
10 the Processing Unit. The internet and the website thus
11 serve as a point of entrance to the inventive device and
12 the means through which the Client may submit a request for
13 registered email or identity verification. The Client may
14 further submit audio, text, visual or video information to
15 the Processing Unit via the website from the Client's
16 remote computer system.

16 The Client must register with the Processing Unit to use
17 the service of its choice. The Processing Unit assigns an
18 identification number or code and a password that
19 corresponds to the registration account for future use by
20 the Client and for the tracking of service requests. Upon
21 registration, the Client may submit a registered or
22 certified email request. By way of example, the Client
23 submits a request to send an electronic message containing
24 an attachment in the form of a word document to a
25 designated recipient, via the website and using the
26 Client's local computers system. The Client selects the
27 appropriate service by way of a pull down menu on the
28 website with the available options: registered mail,

1 certified mail, return receipt mail, delivery confirmation,
2 submission confirmation, identity verification, and the
3 like. The Client submits the message, and any attachments
4 thereto, along with the following information: the Client's
5 account information, the Client's name, the Client's email
6 address, the recipient's name, the recipient's email
7 address, the service or services selected, the date the
8 email message is to be sent on behalf of the Client, and
9 any special requests or instructions.

10 The Processing Unit keeps an internal record of the account
11 request and a copy of the email content (if requested). The
12 Processing Unit submits the electronic message to the
13 intended recipient, as identified by the Client in the
14 registration account, and tracks the submission and
15 delivery cycle of the electronic message. The electronic
16 message clearly indicates that the Client is the originator
17 of the email and that the Processing Unit is an independent
18 authority for registered mail or certified mail
19 confirmation. Upon delivery of the electronic message, the
20 Processing Unit sends the Client a "Confirmation Record",
21 typically in the form of a digital certificate, of the time
22 and date of the submission and of the delivery of the
23 electronic message. In the event the email message was
24 undeliverable, the Confirmation Record will indicate the
25 attempted delivery time and date. The processing Unit
26 archives the Digital Certificate and the corresponding
27 account information for future use and retrieval.

28 With reference to FIG.2, the Processing Unit does not send

1 the electronic mail to the intended recipient on behalf of
2 the Client, even though the Client is the originator of the
3 electronic message. Per the method depicted in FIG.1, the
4 Client accesses the inventive device via the website,
5 establishes a registration account which is assigned an
6 account name and corresponding code or password by the
7 Processing Unit for internal tracking purposes. The Client
8 submits the electronic message, and any attachments
9 thereto, along with the following information: the Client's
10 account information, the Client's name, the Client's email
11 address, the recipient's name, the recipient's email
12 address, the service or services selected, the date the
13 email message is to be sent on behalf of the Client, and
14 any special requests or instructions.

15 The Processing Unit keeps an internal record of the account
16 request and a copy of the email content (if requested). The
17 Processing Unit submits the electronic message to the
18 intended recipient, as identified by the Client in the
19 registration account, and tracks the submission and
20 delivery cycle of the electronic message. In this
21 embodiment of the present invention, The Client remains
22 anonymous and the Processing Unit is identified as the
23 sender. The recipient is notified by the Processing Unit
24 that the Processing Unit is acting as a delivery vehicle
25 for an anonymous identity, and that the originator of the
26 message will be notified of the delivery to the recipient.
27 Should the recipient elect, recipient has the option of
28 posting a reply for the originator of the electronic
message with the Processing Unit. Upon delivery of the

1 anonymous electronic message, the Processing Unit sends the
2 Client a "Confirmation Record", typically in the form of a
3 digital certificate, of the time and date of the submission
4 and of the delivery of the electronic message. If the
5 recipient posted a reply for the originator with the
6 Processing Unit, the reply will be contained in the
7 Confirmation Record as well. In the event the email message
8 was undeliverable, the Confirmation Record will indicate
9 the attempted delivery time and date. The Processing Unit
10 archives the Digital Certificate and the corresponding
11 account information for future use and retrieval.

12 With reference to FIG.3, the Client may request to have the
13 identity of the intended recipient confirmed prior to the
14 recipient receiving the electronic mail. Per the method
15 depicted in FIG.1, the Client must register with the
16 Processing Unit to use the service of its choice on the
17 website. The Processing Unit assigns an identification
18 number or code and a password that corresponds to the
19 registration account for future use by the Client and for
20 the tracking of service requests. Upon registration, the
21 Client may submit an identity verification request, along
22 with a registered or certified email request, should the
23 Client require both services.

24 The Client selects the appropriate service by way of a pull
25 down menu on the website with the available options:
26 registered mail, certified mail, return receipt mail,
27 delivery confirmation, submission confirmation, and the
28 like, along with a request for Identity Verification.

1 Identity shall be established by criteria selected by the
2 sender using a pull down menu on the website. The
3 recipient's identity may be verified by:

- 4 (i) having the intended recipient using a predetermined
5 electronic code provided by the Client; or
6 (ii) having the intended recipient using a predetermined
7 electronic code provided by the Processing Unit;
8 (iii) having the intended recipient go to a Processing
9 Unit service center for an in-person verification
10 using the intended recipient's personal
11 identification, including, but not limited to,
12 personal paperwork such as a birth certificate, a
13 passport, a driver's license and the like; or
14 (iv) having the intended recipient provide bio-metric
15 verification; or
16 (v) other means whereby the intended recipient utilizes a
17 predetermined code, a password or other means of
18 encryption.

19 The function of the identity criteria is to verify the
20 identity of an intended electronic mail recipient prior to
21 receiving the electronic mail on behalf of the Client, or
22 on behalf of the Processing Unit, should the originator of
23 the email wish to remain anonymous.

24 With further reference to FIG. 3, per the preferred
25 embodiment, where a request for Identity Verification is
26 submitted, the Client submits the electronic message, and
27 any attachments thereto, along with the following

1 information: the Client's account information, the Client's
2 name, the Client's email address, the recipient's name, the
3 recipient's email address, the service or services
4 selected, the date the email message is to be sent on
5 behalf of the Client, and any special requests or
6 instructions.

7 The Processing Unit "holds" the electronic mail pending
8 verification of the recipient's identity per the method or
9 means specified by the Client in the corresponding account.
10 The Processing Unit notifies the intended recipient that
11 the Processing Unit is holding an electronic mail for the
12 intended recipient pending verification of his/her
13 identity. The Processing Unit further provides the intended
14 recipient with instructions on how to satisfy the Identity
15 Verification request. The intended recipient may be
16 prompted for a password or code, such as a digital
17 certificate that may be submitted via electronic mail.
18 Alternatively, the intended recipient may be required to
19 provide an in-person verification using personal identity
20 papers, or biometric information, at a stand-alone service
21 center maintained by the present invention.

22 The Processing Unit keeps an internal record of the account
23 request and a copy of the email content (if requested).
24 Upon personal identity verification, the Processing Unit
25 submits the electronic message to the intended recipient,
26 as identified by the Client in the registration account,
27 and tracks the submission and delivery cycle of the
28 electronic message. The electronic message indicates

whether the Client is the originator of the email or whether the Processing Unit is sending the electronic message on behalf of an anonymous entity. Upon delivery of the electronic message, the Processing Unit sends the Client a "Confirmation Record", typically in the form of a digital certificate, of the time and date of the submission and of the delivery of the electronic message. The Confirmation Record further contains the information used to verify the intended recipient's identity. In the event the email message was undeliverable, the Confirmation Record will indicate the attempted delivery time and date. The processing Unit archives the Digital Certificate and the corresponding account information for future use and retrieval.

In any of the foregoing embodiments of the present invention, the Processing Unit utilizes conventional hardware and software applications. In the preferred embodiment, the main server will be the host server that tracks incoming and outgoing electronic messages; that tracks customer accounts and identities; that archives all relevant information for future use and/or reference; and that disseminates the foregoing data to regional/local servers and clients as necessary. The main server is the central processing unit that serves to receive client account information and to facilitate requests for services and transactions described herein.

Said electronic mail processing system is comprised of the following elements:

- 1 (i) an information storage system that will receive the
2 client's account registration information;
- 3
4 (ii) an information storage system that will receive the
5 client's request for certified and registered mail
6 services, and for identity verification services;
- 7
8 (iii) an outgoing mail information system that will track
9 the time and date of when the client's electronic message
10 was sent to the intended recipient;
- 11
12 (iv) an outgoing mail information system that will track the
13 time and date of when the client's electronic message
14 was delivered to the intended recipient;
- 15
16 (v) an information verification storage system that will
17 track notifications sent to the client in the form of a
18 digital certificate that certify the time and date of
19 when the electronic message was sent to the intended
20 recipient;
- 21
22 (vi) an identity verification storage system that will track
23 the criteria used to establish identity and the time and
24 date of notifications regarding the same; and
- 25
26 (vii) an archive information storage system that will track
27 all verifications for future retrieval by the client if
28 necessary.

The main server structurally serves to store all of the

1 information generated by the invention and its related
2 processes, systems, and methods. The main server functions
3 to receive the electronic requests for service from the
4 Client and disseminate the requests to the appending
5 infrastructure (the "head office") where the request will
6 be processed and packaged to allow tracking of the
7 electronic mail.

8 The regional server interfaces with the main server. The
9 regional sever in turn receives the information from the
10 main server and disseminate it to the local servers. The
11 regional server receives the electronic mail package from
12 the main server and forwards the electronic mail to the
13 intended local server. The structure and function of the
14 regional server is to interface with the main server and
15 provide tracking information of the electronic mail.

16 The local servers will in turn disseminate the electronic
17 mail and/or information to the intended recipient. The
18 local server interfaces with the regional server. The local
19 server receives the electronic mail package and forwards it
20 to the intended recipient as identified by the client. The
21 structure and the function of the local server is to
22 interface with the regional server and to provide tracking
23 information of the electronic mail.

24 The interconnections between the servers include any and
25 all networks and or systems or applications that facilitate
26 the sending and receipt of electronic mail, and any and all
27 infrastructure necessary to facilitate the sending, receipt
28 and confirmation of electronic mail. The various processing

1 systems may also include multiple main frame computers,
2 such as a main frame computer which may be preferably
3 coupled to Local Area Network by means of communications
4 link. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that the
5 main frame computer may be located a great geographic
6 distance from the LAN.

7 The inventive device is capable of a breadth of
8 applications with respect to certified and electronic mail
9 services. In this vein the following terms, as used herein,
10 shall be construed to have the following meanings:

11 "Electronic Mail or Email or Electronic Message" are used
12 interchangeably and all denote an electronic message with
13 varied content contained therein. The electronic mail may
14 comprise, but is not limited to, text data, audio data,
15 visual data, video data, electronic data, electronic
16 attachments and any necessary components thereof.

17
18 "Registered Email" and "Certified Email" are used
19 interchangeably and denote a variety of services offered by
20 the inventive device. The services may comprise, but are
21 not limited to, registered email, certified email, return
22 receipt email, submission confirmation, delivery
23 confirmation, tracking information and routing information.

24
25 "Identity Verification" denotes a variety of services
26 offered by the inventive device. The services may comprise,
27 but are not limited to, verification using digital
28

1 certificates, biometric information such as a thumbprint,
2 voiceprint, retinal scan, a graphical, hand written
3 signature, or personal identity papers such as a drivers
4 license, a passport, and the like.

5
6 "Client" means an individual or entity that tenders a
7 request for services offered by the present invention. The
8 Client may be identified or may remain anonymous.

9
10 "Intended Recipient" means an individual or entity as
11 identified by the Client to receive the electronic message.
12 A single electronic may have more than one intended
13 recipient.

14
15 With respect to the above description then, it is deemed
16 readily apparent and obvious to one skilled in the art,
17 that all equivalent relationships to those illustrated in
18 the drawings and described in the specification are
19 intended to be encompassed by the present invention.
20 Therefore, the foregoing is considered as illustrative only
21 of the principles of the invention. Further, since
22 numerous modifications and changes will readily occur to
23 those skilled in the art, it is not desired to limit the
24 invention to the exact construction and operation shown and
25 described, and accordingly, all suitable modifications and
26 equivalents may be resorted to, falling within the scope of
27 the invention.

28 **I CLAIM:**